



Georgia Avenue Revitalization
A Commitment to Neighborhoods

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Government of the District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Prepared by D. C. Office of Planning
Andrew Altman, Director
August 2000



ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS
MAYOR

Dear Citizens:

We all wish to see Georgia Avenue return to its historic role -- a vibrant and vital gateway into the Nation's Capital. I am excited that our restoration has begun.

Through the Georgia Avenue Revitalization Initiative, we are committing **\$111 million dollars** to attract new business and retail opportunities, create new jobs and build new homes. The Georgia Avenue initiative is a priority of Councilwoman Charlene Drew Jarvis and other citizen groups that will strengthen and stabilize the corridor, create clean, safe streets and stimulate further economic development.

Focusing our resources on Georgia Avenue makes good business and civic sense for the District. This critical gateway connects our city with the new Convention Center, the Southwest Waterfront and the Maryland suburbs. Georgia Avenue serves as the principal address for Howard University, the Howard University Hospital and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. There are also 500 commercial businesses and two Metro Stations in this area. We have the unique opportunity to serve customers, tourists and 59,000 District citizens each day with improvements on the Georgia Avenue corridor.

The initiative represents two key components of Neighborhood Action -- making government work and promoting economic development. These commitments represent how government agencies are coming together to be responsive to our citizens. It is only through our partnership with the community that we will achieve revitalization.

Please review to the information contained in this Executive Summary. You will find specific details about our initiative, its targeted areas and our strategy for economic development. Together, we can create a prosperous Georgia Avenue.

We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Anthony A. Williams".

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor

CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
II.	HISTORY OF GEORGIA AVENUE.....	6
III.	CURRENT CONDITIONS AND ISSUES TO ADDRESS.....	7
IV.	VISION FOR GEORGIA AVENUE.....	10
	Target Area Map.....	11
	Neighborhood Activity Centers	
	A. Shaw-Howard Metro and Cultural District.....	12
	B. Howard University District.....	12
	C. Georgia-Petworth Metro District.....	14
	D. Upper Georgia Avenue Gateway.....	17
V.	STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT.....	21
VI.	APPENDICES.....	25
	A. Activities This Summer	26
	B. Summary of Investments by Neighborhood Center.....	27
	C. Planning Studies.....	28



INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Avenue Revitalization Initiative includes a multi-million dollar commitment from District of Columbia government agencies charged with maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the city's neighborhoods. This document outlines the District's commitment and the roles of the private sector and not for profit partners in achieving the many components of this Implementation Plan.

Georgia Avenue is an historic gateway corridor and federal highway linking many neighborhoods abutting it to the Downtown and the city as a whole to other parts of the metropolitan region. Stretching approximately 4.3 miles from Florida to Eastern Avenues, the District line with the state of Maryland, community stakeholders, area institutions, concerned citizens and the Federal government have made Georgia a priority for reinvestment.

Within the District, Georgia Avenue traverses Wards 1, 2, and 4, covering 65 city blocks, and making it the longest, majority-retail corridor in the city. Beginning in Ward 2, the Shaw neighborhood is connected to Ward 1's Howard Gateway, Pleasant Plains, historic LeDroit Park, and Park View neighborhoods to Ward 4's Petworth, Brightwood Park, Brightwood, Shepherd Park and historic Takoma. These diverse neighborhoods are home to over 59,000 residents, approximately 500 businesses, a plethora of religious institutions, and significant educational and medical stakeholders.

This revitalization initiative is happening now for several critical reasons. The local and national economies continue to grow. There is an increasing demand for in-town housing. Crime rates in the District decreased 7.7 percent over the last year. The District unemployment rate is low and has decreased from 5.6 percent in March to 4.9 percent in April. The median income is \$40,000 with millions in disposable income. Momentum has begun to build as new development is happening on and about Georgia Avenue:

1. New retail locating and expanding along the corridor
2. Downtown Convention Center
3. Downtown Silver Spring, Maryland
4. U Street Renaissance
5. Technology growth in the Florida Avenue/New York Avenue corridor
6. Howard University/LeDroit Park Revitalization



Poised between the expanding economies of Downtown Washington and Silver Spring, Maryland, Georgia Avenue's many assets are instrumental to this revitalization strategy. Major landholders and job centers Howard University and Walter Reed Army Medical Center have growth plans that include or impact residential, retail and commercial development on and around their campuses. Resources have been allocated to assist existing businesses become more competitive and their establishments' quality contributors to the built environment. Partnering with community stakeholders, Georgia Avenue's three historic districts and numerous culturally significant landmarks are being woven into a redevelopment strategy that not only includes housing rehabilitation and new construction but also a tourism link to the Monumental Core and its 20 million annual visitors. Asset upon asset is being leveraged to 1) assist existing residents and businesses, and 2) to attract new businesses, revenue streams and jobs to the corridor while improving the overall health and vibrancy of Georgia Avenue and the District as a whole.

Acting through the District's Office of Planning, an inter-agency task force has been convened by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to implement this revitalization strategy. The task force includes the departments of Housing and Community Development, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Tax and Revenue, Metropolitan Police, and the office of Banking and Financial Institutions, Office of Property Management, and the Housing Finance Agency. The initiative takes a comprehensive survey of conditions along the corridor and identifies funding recommendations to address critical issues over the next five years.

Employing the principles of Neighborhood Action through which significant improvements are implemented at the neighborhood or corridor level using the coordinated resources of the various municipal departments and other partners this effort begins with a \$111 million commitment to Georgia Avenue's economic revitalization. Project and program funding have been identified in the areas of housing, commercial, infrastructure, public facilities, transportation, public safety, and cultural enhancement. This commitment can be broken roughly into four categories: 1) "cleaning up" the streets and parks, 2) "fixing up" existing structures, 3) "filling up" vacant properties and storefronts with new residents, businesses and customers, and 4) "keeping it" up year upon year.



HISTORY OF GEORGIA AVENUE

Georgia Avenue has historically played a significant role in the development and growth of the city and has derived its identity from the types of uses that found an address along the corridor. The Georgia Avenue corridor has been the center of residential and commercial activity and an integral part of the surrounding neighborhoods since development of the new federal city began expanding towards Maryland in the late 1800's.

The Shaw neighborhood south of Florida Avenue is part of the original master plan prepared by Pierre L'Enfant and Benjamin Banneker. The transportation system of the city greatly influenced the direction of residential and commercial development along the corridor. In the 1800's several streetcar lines were extended from the city's center. One was the Seventh Street route that terminated at Rock Creek Church Road. A turnpike built in 1819, ran along the avenue from the old city boundary (Florida Avenue) to the District line (Eastern Avenue). By 1912 trolley service extended north on the Seventh Street line to Silver Spring, Maryland. In the 1930s buses were introduced and eventually replaced the trolley car. These early transportation routes shaped shopping patterns and created the commercial frontage on the corridor.

In the 1850's most of the development in the city was still south of S Street. Howard University was established in 1867 from extensive federal land extending further north to the Old Soldiers Home. LeDroit Park was developed in the 1870's on land acquired from the university. The areas north of Howard University to the Maryland boundary grew slowly until the early 1800's when several racetracks were built. They became a major social and recreational activity and drew large crowds.

By 1902 development boomed, former estates were subdivided and the pattern of row house development was established in most of the area. From 1890 to the mid 1900s Brightwood (including all the territory from Silver Spring to Rock Creek Church Road) was subdivided into Brightwood, Manor, Takoma, and Shepherd Park. The U.S. Soldiers and Airmen's Home, built in 1909, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, established in 1922, stimulated homeownership and neighborhood commercial development and shaped the area's landscape.

By the early to mid 1900s, Georgia Avenue was recognized as one of the most successful, prestigious mixed-use commercial corridors in the city. It served the residential, recreational and social needs of a rich, vibrant and culturally diverse community. However, integration laws in the 1960s caused out migration to the suburbs and the population shifted from majority white to majority black. Also during this period the corridor began to lose its vitality as a center of commerce due to suburban growth, which provided and continue to produce strong competition to the retail stores along Georgia Avenue.



CURRENT CONDITIONS AND ISSUES

Many events have led to the current condition of Georgia Avenue over the last 30 plus years ranging from civil unrest in the late 1960s to suburban flight over the next two decades. Since the 1990s, Georgia Avenue is typical of an inner-city area going through transition with new housing and many viable businesses that are expanding and attracted to the area. However, its historic function as a continuous commercial corridor is questionable, as the market seems to prefer single source retailers.

Residential

Georgia Avenue has a diverse housing stock that is generally in good condition. The adjacent neighborhoods are developed primarily with row houses of similar architecture. Most of the homes are two-story, brick and stone with front porches, and are set back the same distance from the street. Very few homes in the area are single-family detached or semi-detached. Concentrations of low-rise multi-family housing, walk-up/garden apartments, and elevator apartments are scattered along the corridor.

The continued well being of neighborhoods adjacent to Georgia Avenue depends, in part, on maintaining, conserving, and expanding the housing stock, particularly affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. Partnerships between the private sector, nonprofit housing providers, and the District Government are necessary to meet the growing needs of District residents. Actions to implement housing objectives are: (a) to protect, preserve, maintain and rehabilitate the existing owned and rental housing stock; (b) to encourage new and rehabilitated housing choices for area residents; (c) to increase homeownership; and (d) to promote home maintenance and improvement among low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters of single- unit housing to enable them to keep their units up to code standard.

Commercial

Georgia Avenue contains a variety of commercial establishments, primarily retail in storefront shops. The major businesses include pharmacies, grocery stores, health food establishments, bank branch offices, auto parts suppliers, gasoline stations, used car dealers, and automotive repair shops. Neighborhood serving retail includes small convenience stores, with few comparison goods, fast food shops, beauty/barber shops, and grocery delicatessens. Small, service-oriented offices are also common.



Many of the existing businesses are located in older structures in varying degrees of disarray. A large number of structures along Georgia Avenue are converted row houses rather than buildings designed and constructed for commercial use. Consequently, much of the existing commercial retail space is less than 1,800 square feet per site. There are a few larger and more modern mix-use structures along the corridor.

The Revitalization Initiative has a number of programs to stimulate economic development, create jobs, improve conditions at neighborhood serving retail centers, and to attract new businesses and additional services to the Georgia Avenue commercial corridor. The role of the community and private sector are to (1) build strategic partnerships among local merchants and property owners, for example, Neighborhood Business Improvement Districts (BID); (2) strengthen capacity of local small businesses to thrive in a growing economy through the Small Business Development Center; and (3) increase opportunities to access capital. It establishes a cooperative spirit between business owners, banking institutions and the city to revitalize this corridor.

Institutional

Interspersed along the corridor are major institutions that serve the city, region, and nation. The major institutions include, Howard University (HU), Howard University Hospital, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. These facilities, in addition to offering needed educational and medical services also provide the bulk of the jobs (nearly 13,000) along the corridor.

Howard University (HU), the Fannie Mae Corporation, and the District government have targeted the Howard University District and adjacent LeDroit Park area for revitalization and new homeownership opportunities for HU employees. The University converted the former Howard Inn to a bookstore and conference center. HU plans to redevelop properties on the west side of Georgia Avenue between W Street and Barry Place. The Howard University Community Association opened an office in the 2700 block of Georgia Avenue. A vacant warehouse space in the 2000 block of Eighth Street was converted to an entertainment complex.

The Howard University District includes significant and near-term commercial redevelopment opportunities. Many of the projects are key to the long-term operation and expansion of this major institutional/cultural/entertainment/commercial retail area. The projects proposed improve access to quality housing, restores and revitalizes vacant space with increases in retail space and promotes new retail businesses.



Transportation/ Infrastructure

Georgia Avenue serves as a major arterial route providing primary access to the neighborhoods and between the city's gateway and the Maryland suburbs. This route averages traffic flow in excess of 20,000 cars per day. The traffic includes commuter traffic into the central employment area, local traffic by residents, Walter Reed Army Medical Center users and employees, and Howard University students and faculty and Howard University Hospital users and employees.

In terms of accessibility the Georgia Avenue corridor is well served by existing local and arterial streets as well as by mass transportation. Accessibility of the area is enhanced with two Metrorail stations, both on the Green Line. The Shaw-Howard University station has an entrance at Seventh and S streets and the Georgia-Petworth station has entrances on both the east and west side of Georgia Avenue at New Hampshire Avenue. Several Metrobus routes along the corridor serve the area.

The overall transportation initiative is to maintain and provide an efficient system, maximize accessibility and the movement of people and goods, and to provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle circulations along the Georgia Avenue corridor and within adjacent neighborhoods. Public infrastructure improvements (urban design/streetscape, open space enhancements, corridor maintenance, and local roadway improvements) are major components of corridor-wide investments.



VISION FOR GEORGIA AVENUE

This revitalization initiative will produce new homeownership opportunities, new retail and office space, new jobs, and new annual tax revenues. It is envisioned that the Georgia Avenue corridor and the surrounding communities will be vibrant, in-town, mixed-use neighborhoods. Reaching the vision begins with strategic redevelopment of targeted areas where a unique sense of place can be created as housing, commerce, transportation, employment and cultural activities converge. This strategy requires strengthening key areas along the avenue that offer the greatest potential for growth and a critical mass of investment.

Through specific interventions, the goal is to transform Georgia Avenue into a series of distinct places that define the character of the communities abutting it. These neighborhood activity centers should accommodate uses that are critical to the needs of the area as well as the enormous amount of commuters who travel through these communities.

The Revitalization Initiative identifies four neighborhood activity centers around which both public and private investments should be concentrated. The neighborhood activity centers are defined as follows:

- A. Shaw-Howard University Metro Cultural District**
- B. Howard University District**
- C. Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro District**
- D. Upper Georgia Avenue Gateway**



Target Area A Shaw-Howard Metro/ Cultural District *Florida Avenue to S Street*

Department of the History of Ideas, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia

A. Shaw-Howard Metro and Cultural District

B. Howard University District

Goals

- Highlight history and cultural heritage of area
- Restore key landmark properties
- Strengthen the identity of historic neighborhoods
- Identify commercial and cultural opportunities that serve surrounding neighborhoods
- Improve health and safety

Public Investment A

• Howard Theater	\$300,000	2001
• Cultural District Redevelopment Area	\$6 Million	2001-2002

TOTAL INVESTMENT \$6.3 MILLION

Public Investment B

• LeDroit Park Streetscape Improvements	\$10.8 Million	Summer 2000
• Banneker Recreation Center Renovations	6.7 Million	Underway-2002

TOTAL INVESTMENT \$17.5 MILLION

A. Shaw-Howard Metro and Cultural District

B. Howard University District

Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan





C. Georgia/Petworth Metro District

Goals

- Increase local jobs and new business opportunities
- Stabilize and enhance local commercial businesses
- Identify opportunities for new infill housing
- Improve the health and safety of the surrounding neighborhoods
- Enhance pedestrian and open spaces

Public Investments

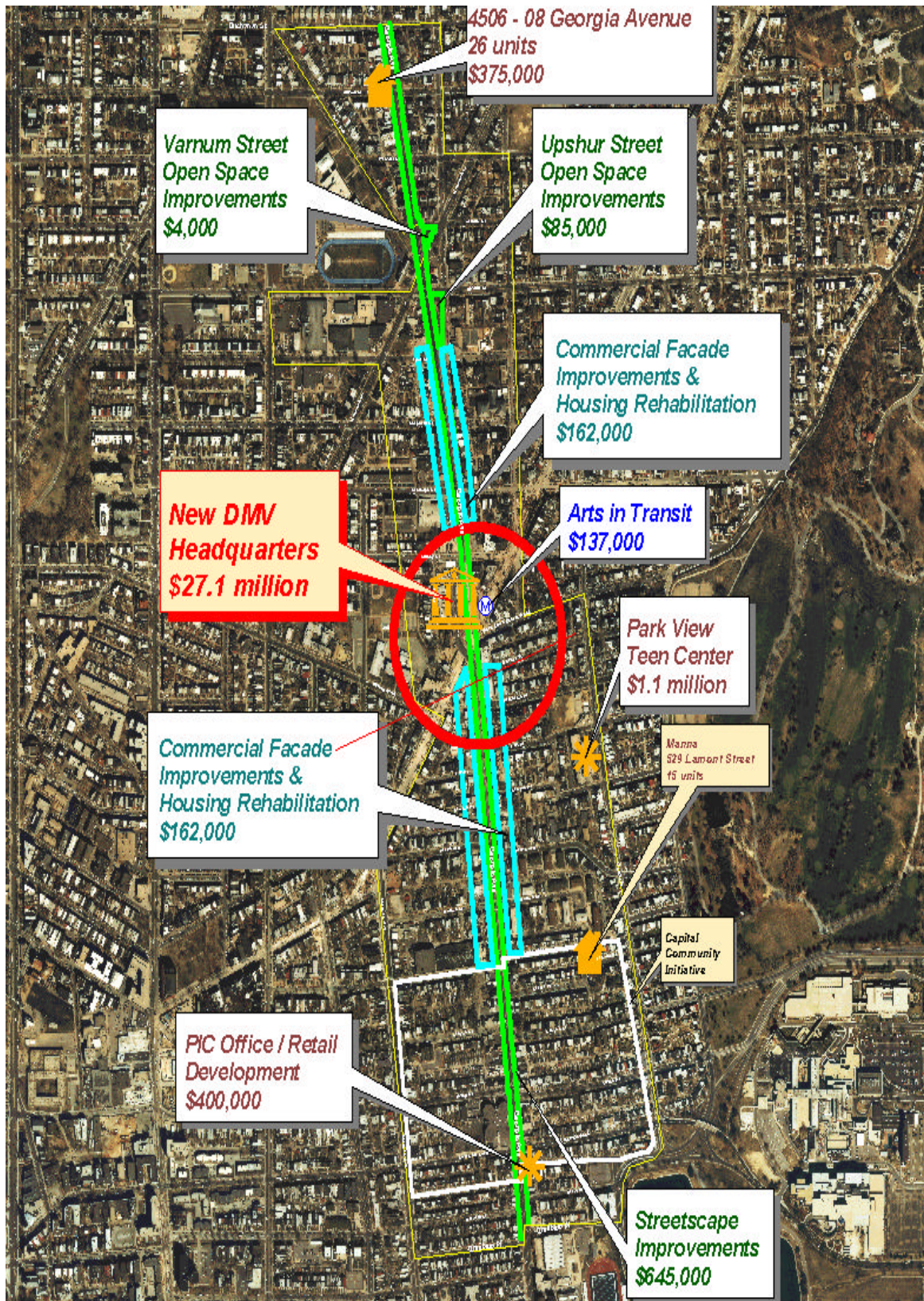
• DMV Headquarters 190 new permanent jobs	\$27.1 Million	Completion 2003
• Streetscape Enhancements Gresham Place to Upshur Street	\$645,600	Underway
• PIC Office/Retail Development 2900 block of Georgia Avenue	\$400,000	Summer 2000
• Open Space Improvements Georgia Avenue & Upshur Street Georgia Avenue & Varnum Street	\$89,000	Summer 2000 Fall 2000
• Capital Community/Public Safety Mini-stations	\$600,000	Summer 2000
• Park View Teen Center Expansion	\$1,100,000	Fall 2000
• Arts-in-Transit Program	\$137,000	Fall 2000
• Commercial Facade Improvements 53 facades	\$324,000	2001
• Housing Rehabilitation 4506-08 Georgia Avenue (26 units)	\$375,000	2001

TOTAL INVESTMENT \$30.77 MILLION

C. Georgia Avenue - Petworth Metro District

Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan







D/D1. Upper Georgia Avenue Gateway

Goals

- Strengthen commercial and civic identity of the Gateway
- Identify opportunity sites for new commercial investments
- Stabilize and enhance existing commercial businesses
- Target obsolete retail areas for new residential development
- Identify rehab and infill housing opportunities

Public Investments

• Street Enhancements Street resurfacing	\$14,000,000	Underway
• Streetscape Enhancements Fern Street to Eastern Avenue Hamilton to Ingraham Street	\$642,000 \$78,000	Underway 2001
• Small Business Development Center DC Chamber of Commerce, Federal Reserve Bank, Riggs Bank	\$25,000	Summer 2000
• Gateway Facade Improvements 58 facades 6200, 7300, 7700 blocks	\$354,000	
• Emery Recreation Center Renovation	\$5,250,000	Fall 2000
• Fort Stevens Senior Center	\$1,100,000	Fall 2000
• Housing Rehabilitation 5829 Georgia Avenue (8 units) 6650-76 Georgia Avenue (105 units)	\$92,000 \$5,693,000	2000
• Open Space Improvements Georgia Avenue & Arkansas Ave.	\$5,000	Fall 2000

TOTAL INVESTMENT \$27.24 MILLION

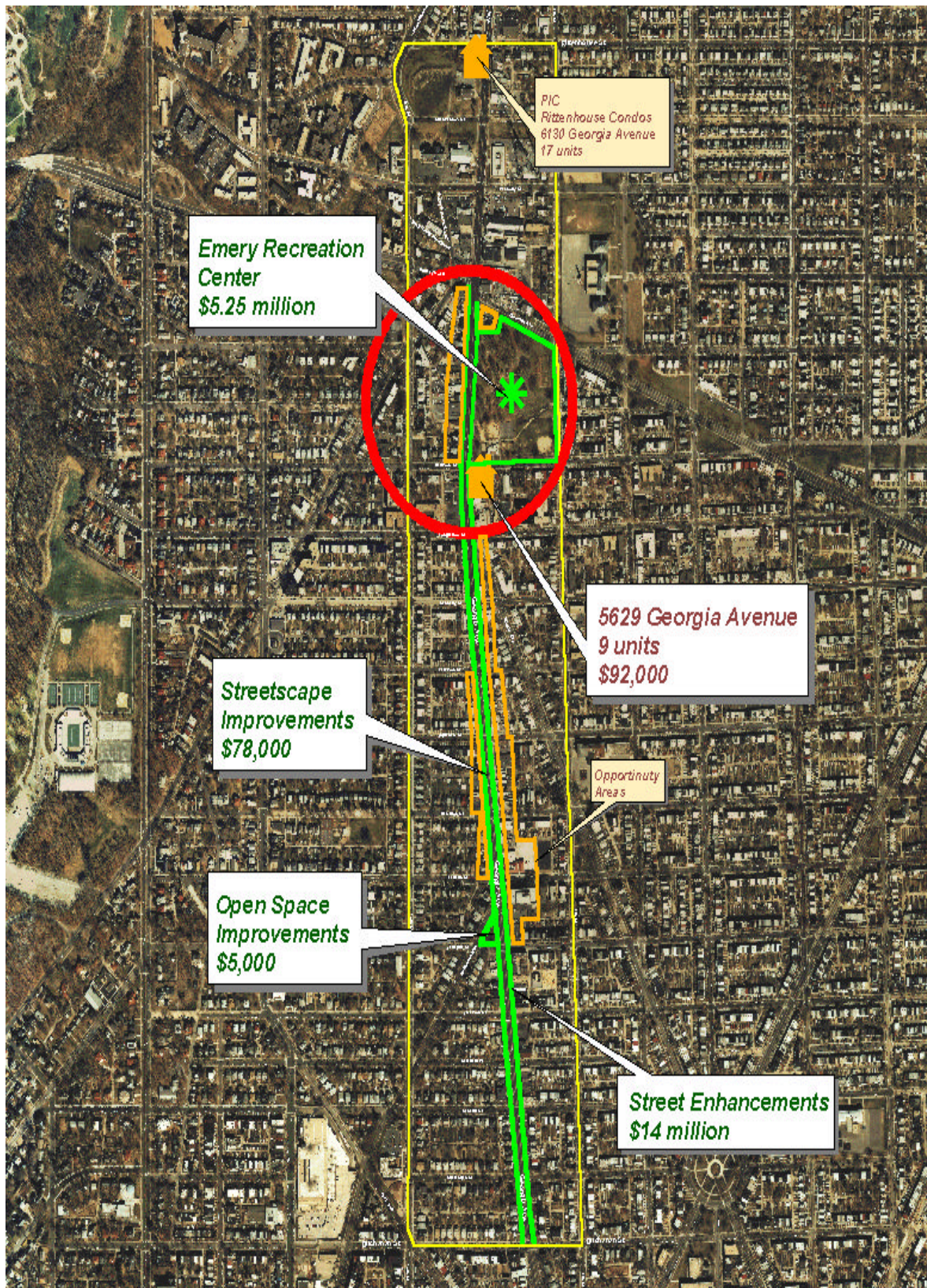
D/D1. Upper Georgia Avenue Gateway

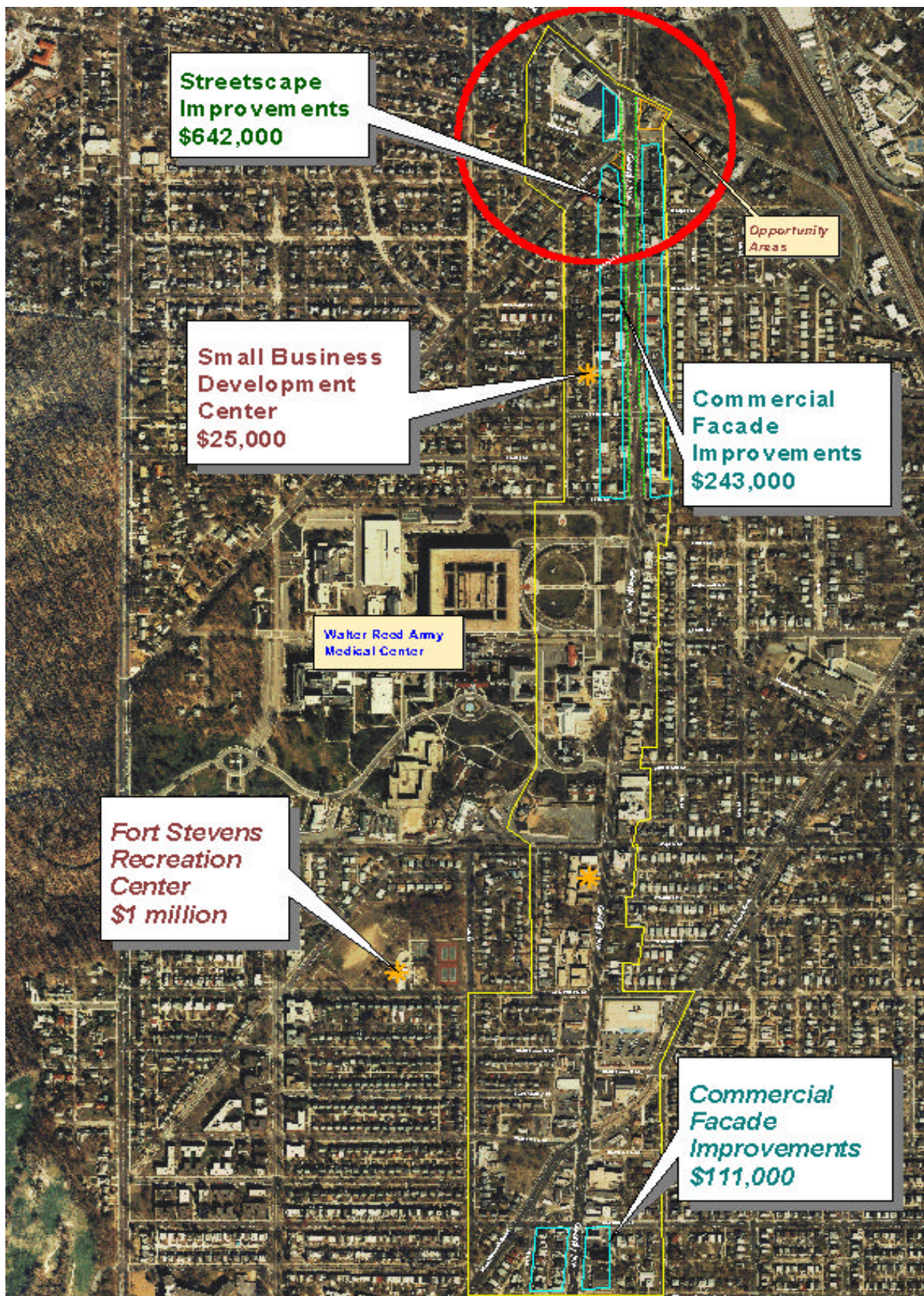
Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan



Department of the District of Columbia, Office of Planning, August 2000









STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT

The public support for this effort is strong. One of the greatest indicators of the District Government's desire to see that this Revitalization Initiative is successful is the \$111 million commitment.

Additionally, the District's commitment additionally includes various programs and efforts to restore Georgia Avenue properties. The Capital Community initiative is designed to help residents reclaim the eight-block area between Hobart Place and Lamont Street. Over 500 commercial and residential properties will have physical condition inspections to identify and eliminate conditions that adversely impact the health and safety of residents and economic growth of the Georgia Avenue area. The District will initiate a "Main Streets" commercial revitalization program. Employment services efforts will be expanded. A Georgia Avenue maintenance program will be initiated. Georgia Avenue will be highlighted in the "Beyond the Monument" initiative to showcase fascinating neighborhoods beyond the national mall and accessible by mass transit system. The District will fund certain strategically located public art projects throughout to help create stronger neighborhood identity. Through the Community Reinvestment Act, the District will partner with institutional stakeholders to obtain investments for increasing low- and moderate-income housing and increase the range of financial services throughout target neighborhoods.

The task of revitalizing Georgia Avenue is large, but so too is the District's determination to be successful at this effort. Partnerships with other interested and motivated stakeholders are welcomed.





Georgia Avenue Commitment

"A Downpayment on Success"

\$111 Million

**\$27.1 Million
DMV Headquarters**

\$20 Million - Housing Initiatives

\$18 Million - Commercial & Main
Street Revitalization Initiatives

\$30.2 Million - Streetscape and
Infrastructure

\$14.2 Million - Recreation and
Public Facilities

\$1.5 Million - Transportation, Arts,
Public Safety

Georgia Avenue Commitment

Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan



Corridor-Wide Investments

Housing

\$5.2 Million

- Homestead Program
- Apartment Improvement Program
- Single Family Rehabilitation Assistance Program
- Home Purchase Assistance Program
- Adopt-A-House Program

Commercial

\$11 Million

- Building Rehabilitation Fund
- Redevelopment Fund
- Strategic Property Inspections
- Main Street Revitalization Initiative
- Business District Maintenance Program

Infrastructure

\$4 Million

- Corridor Maintenance
- Adopt-A-Park Program

Transportation & Traffic Assessment

\$800,000

Clean and Safe Initiatives

- Weed & Seed Program
- Capital Communities
- Adopt-A-Block Program

Cultural Enhancement Initiative

- Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

Tax Incentives

TOTAL INVESTMENT

\$21 MILLION

Corridor-Wide Investments

Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan



Government of the District of Columbia, Office of Planning, June 2000





Georgia Avenue Results

“Paving the Way for New Investments”

- 190 new permanent jobs at DMV
- Over \$5 million in private construction contracts
- 111 commercial facade improvements
- 300 units of new and rehabilitated housing
- 42 blocks of infrastructure and streetscape enhancements
- Prepare opportunity sites for new commercial investment
- Access to more than \$1.2 billion in federal tax benefits

Georgia Avenue Results

Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan

Source: District of Columbia Department of Planning, 2000

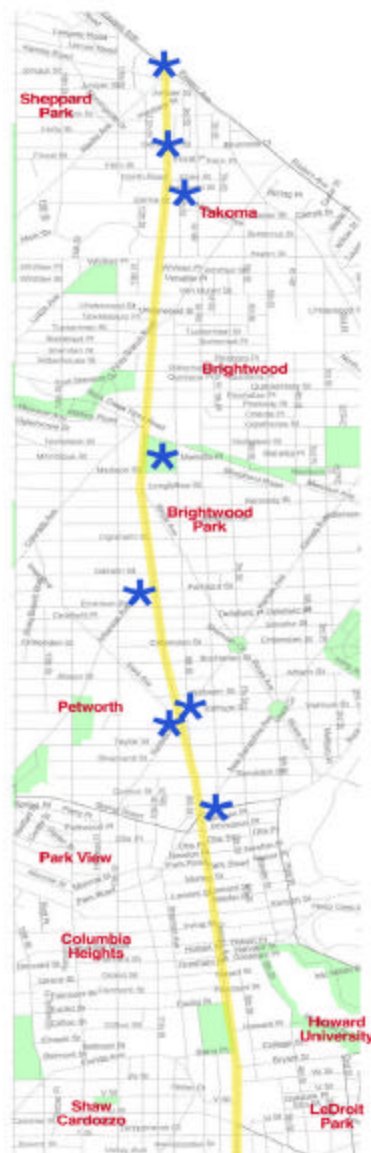
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Activities This Summer

Appendix B: Summary of Investment by Neighborhood Center

Appendix C: Planning Studies





Activities to Look for This Summer

- Small Business Development Center grand opening
- Gateway streetscape improvements
- Emery Park Center renovation ground breaking
- Beautification at Varnum, Upshur and Arkansas open spaces
- Installation of art in transit at Petworth Metro Station
- Adopt-A-House program kick-off
- Gateway business improvement district maintenance program
- PIC Office/Retail Development
- Capital Community/Public Safety Initiative

Activities to Look for This Summer Georgia Avenue Revitalization Implementation Plan



APPENDIX B

Summary of Investments by Neighborhood Center

CORRIDOR	A	B	C	D	TOTAL INVESTMENT
Georgia Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area	Shaw-Howard University Metro District Wards 1 & 2	Howard University District Ward 1	Georgia-Petworth Metro District Wards 1 and 4	Upper Georgia Avenue District Ward 4	
\$21 Million	\$6.3 Million	\$17.5 Million	\$30.77 Million	\$27.24 Million	\$111 Million



Planning Studies

DC Agenda Support Corporation and Ward 4 Task Force Gateway Committee, *Upper Georgia Avenue Commercial Corridor*, A. G. Dobbins & Associates, June 2000

Government of the District of Columbia, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, Amended February 19, 1999

Howard University-LeDroit Park Revitalization Initiative, Concord Partners, January 1999

Howard University 1998 Central Campus Plan, *UniverCity 2020*, December, 1998

Peoples Involvement Corporation, *7 Street/Georgia Avenue Market Study and Implementation Plan*, RER Economic Consultants, Inc., December 1998

District of Columbia Government and the Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority, *The Economic Resurgence of Washington, D.C., Citizens Plan for Prosperity in the 21st Century*, November 1998

Manna, Incorporated, *7 Street/Lower Georgia Avenue Corridor*, Hammer, Siler, George Associates, October 1994

Department of Housing and Community Development, *Upper Georgia Avenue Commercial Revitalization Potential*, Hammer, Siler, George Associates, December 1982